

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, March 22. 1712.

IT would be no News to the World, to tell them of the Confusions we are in upon our Politick Affairs, and how the Fury of Parties Rages among us; selling Friend, betraying Interests, breaking Unions, affronting Governments; and all the Extremes that ever a poor distracted Nation was run up to; some falling out about Peace, some mad for War upon any Terms, and willing to have Peace upon no Terms; some disliking all Conditions, and quarrelling all the Men that make them; and this for the sake of the Men, more than the Conditions: Again, others so mad for a Peace, that they may be at leisure for other

Mischief, that they care not what the Conditions are, or whether there are any Conditions or no, forward to make Peace as broad, that they may break the Peace as Home; no Government, no Ministry, no Managers, can run fast enough for them, and willing they are to run the whole Nation, and themselves too, out of Breath; and this they will quickly do, if they think fit to go on a little farther.

But it is endless to trace your Politick Disorders, and therefore leaving you alone a while in your own keeping, I shall quit you some time, in hope you will restore yourselves to primitive Tranquillity hereafter;
But

But there is another Thing, the Settling and Establishing of which, will make you all happy, and the neglect and omitting whereof, is not only an unspeakable Injury to particular Persons, but a great Disadvantage to the whole Nation, and by which strange and unusual Confusions attend us, and this is in Trade.

It is with singular Pleasure that I quit raking in the Nations Lay-stall, I mean your furious Debates about Peace and War, and retire out of the Stench of your Party-Strife, to look into the great Affair of Trade, but even here it is astonishing to see what Confusions we are in, Biting and Devouring one another.

Here you have Foreign Trade Encouraged, to oppress *English* Manufactures, as in the Brass, &c. there Engrossers of Coals making a Monopoly of the Labour of the Poor, as at *Newcastle*; here Vintners Poisoning the Town with Nauseous Mixtures and Adulterations of Wine, and then Lampoon, the Merchants that would furnish us with Real Wines instead of Bolderdash; there *Custom-House* Officers making Merchants pay Duty as Retailers, and then letting Retailers pay but as Merchants; Extents Ruining Trade, and *Custom-House* Credit the Traders; Bonds to the Queen Ravage the City, and depopulate the whole *Virginia*; Walk on the *Exchange*; Where must these Distractions in Trade end? And what can be the Reason why the Grievances of Trade, tho' we are Universally a Trading Nation, obtain less Consideration, and are longer before they are Redress'd, than in any Nation in the World?

There's our long Contended Affair of the *African* Trade; How many Sessions of Parliament have the Disputes between the Company and Separate Traders depended, till the Company, like a Man Hang'd in Chains alive, is made to devour its own Flesh, and eat out its own Vitals, and so to die by Torment, a Languishing and Lingering Death? Nay, had not the present Parliament taken a Method last Session to have the Government support the Trade till the great Question could be de-

termin'd, the Company had given up the Ghost above a Year ago.

I profess I am ready to blush for the Judgments of some People, when the Arguments on both these Sides come upon the Stage — The *Parliament* has always put the Thing so right and so home to the *Separate Traders*, that they could not avoid setting about an Answer, but how wretched an Answer it is, let any one judge.

The Question is, *What Security can you give to the Government, that you will preserve and uphold the Trade, and that you are able to carry it on?* The Company can give an essential Security, they can Engage their Charter and Privileges, but the *Separate Traders* cannot have any Thing of this to offer; the Company's whole Concern, Settlements, Forts, Factories, and even their Stock itself, eventually, is a Security for Performance of the Conditions they Agree to.

Such as for the Supplying a sufficient Number of *Negroes* to the Colonies.

Such as Indenting at a stated Price, in Time of War and Peace.

Such as supporting the Factories and Settlements in *Africa*, which are Essential to the Trade.

And Such as carrying on the Trade in general.

Come to the *Separate Traders*, and ask them — Gentlemen, *What can you say?* What Security have you to offer, that whether you get or loose, you will carry on this Trade to such a Magnitude, as that the Colonies shall be supply'd with *Negroes*, and the Settlements on the Coast of *Africa* supported and Maintained, that so the Trade may not be lost to the Nation?

And what Answer do the Gentlemen make? What have they amus'd three Parliaments with? What have they pretended to satisfy the Commissioners of Trade with? Never School Boy that had play'd Trovas had less to say for himself why he should not be whip'd; never Men of Sense would give such Answers to so clear a Question, that is to say, if they had any other Alt—

Whist—But having nothing else to say, they are driven to the Necessity of talking after a Rate, which they would not suffer their own Servants to talk to them at.

Pardon me, Gentlemen, I do not say the *Separate Traders* are Fools, No, no, far from it; but what can a wise Man do with a Foolish Argument? It makes him talk what he is ashamed of himself; these Gentlemen are Men of Sense enough, but what can they do? Their Cause hampers them, and they must talk thus, because they can have nothing else to say; let us but repeat a little of their Discourse.

For Security of the Trade, and Support of the *Settlements* in *Africa*, say they, we are willing to pay an Indulto, or Rate of so much *per Cent.* upon our Trade, as shall be determin'd.

This is, no doubt, a very just Proposal; Come, Gentlemen, says the Parliament, *How much per Cent. will be sufficient?* We'll put a Case for them, within the reach of their own Notions.

Suppose the *Settlements* are to be maintain'd by 5000 or 10000 *l. per Ann.* and the *Separate Traders* are willing to pay 5 or 10 *per Cent.* upon their Trade, then they must Trade for one Hundred Thousand Pound *per Ann.* or let it be any lesser or greater Sum they please, it does not alter the Case at all.

Well, Gentlemen, then you must give Security that you will Trade Yearly for this 100000 *l. per Ann.* or suppose it were but half the Money to be Rais'd, and half the Trade, this must be Secur'd, What is the Answer?

Say the *Separate Traders*, O, there is no doubt, no Question to be made but we shall Trade for more than that — I once a Man a Hundred Pounds, and he comes and tells me, Mr. Review, I am not very easie at my Money lying in your Hands, give me Security, that it shall be paid, and the Interest of it for the use of my Family: Oh, Sir, say I, there is no doubt, no question to be made but I shall pay you, and your Family shall be sure to have both Principal

and Interest; Well, but says the *Tradition*, I expect Security; Sir, say I to him, I wonder you should ask Security, there is no manner of need of it, I tell you I will do it; 'tis Nonsense to talk of Security, there is no doubt of it — At this, the Man calls me Fool, and the next Day sends an Officer to me for his Money.

The Parliament, the Commissioners of Trade, the Government, thinking themselves concern'd to Secure and Preserve so Useful, so Beneficial, so absolutely Necessary a Trade to Britain, and tel'd, I had almost said tir'd, with the Importunities of the *Separate Traders*, and the Clamours of the Petitions which they have rais'd, (as *Witches* do the Devil) from the several Counties of England, and made the poor People say any Thing they bid them, have put this home Question to the said *Separate Traders*, viz. What Security can you give for preserving the Trade?

Their Answer for at least two Year, was, That it was Nonsense to ask Security, and there was no doubt and no Question to be made of it — The *Separate Traders* always had set out so many Ships, and therefore it was not to be doubted, but they always would do so.

But this was such an ill Logick in Trade, that at last they grew ashamed of it — It was said to them thus — You have Traded for so much *per Ann.* and you intend to do it, and as long as you get Money by it, it is likely you will, But will you give Security that you will Trade for so much, get or loose? Every one knows that a Merchant Trades to get Money, that in his Senses, he will Trade no more to this or that Place, when his Prospect of gain ceases; if this should happen but one Year, no Man being oblig'd to Trade the next Year, the Trade is lost.

But a Company is bound to support their Interest, and must Trade on, if they should last seven Year together, in hopes to recover it again, and to preserve the Trade; and therefore these can give Security, the others cannot.

At

At last we find they are come to this, in their Printed Paper, That they will promise to Trade for one Hundred Thousand Pounds per Ann. But where are the Men that will bind their own Estates to this Summ? And if they did, will they oblige themselves, that this Summ shall be liable to make good, Support, and maintain the Forts and Settlements in *Africa*, without which the Trade cannot be maintain'd? Let us see them do this.

Had I Room in this Paper, I should turn myself to our Representatives in Parliament, especially those who serve for the Trading Cities and Manufacturing Towns of this Nation, and Address them earnestly to consider, the Bleeding Condition of this once Flourishing Trade, Decay'd and

Languishing, like a Patient under the Operation of a Surgeon, even under the Cure of a Parliament; I would Represent the general Loss and wither'd State of our Commerce in general, under so tedious and expensive a War, a War of losses to Trade, whatever Victories we have obtain'd by Land; and of how much the greater Necessity it is to us all, that such a Trade as this, so absolutely within ourselves, so supply'd by our own Manufactures our, so Beneficial a Return home, so much the Life of our Colonies, and able so much to Enrich the whole Nation, should be preserv'd; but I have not Room for this here, and cannot do it so slightly as the few Lines left me would do it; I shall beg leave to be more particular hereafter.

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